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THE INTERNATIONAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SOCIETY

**People and philosophies progressing in TIEMS - -
almost a symbiosis of technology and psychology**

>> Emergency Management Perspectives <<

THE ISSUE

The people involved in The International Emergency Management Society, and the philosophies steering their activities, come from a multitude of professions - such as Physics, Engineering, Information technology, Architecture, Administration & Management, Law, Geography, Medicine & Health Sciences, Psychology, Sociology, Politology, Media, and so on.

They all deal with emergencies. There are three essential concerns:

- <> how emergencies are perceived
- <> how emergencies are assessed
- <> how emergencies are managed

How all this is handled varies across the multifarious disciplines - possibly even more than across the manifold countries from where TIEMS' members stem. So you can wonder - do they share essential concepts? Do they talk to each other? Do they understand and respect other views?

The crucial features of many hazards, such as earthquakes, volcanos, floods, transport by cars/planes/trains/ships, power production, especially coal, and nuclear power plants fires (urban fires and forest fires), storms (hurricanes, tornados, cyclones) are *technological facets*: intensity, timing, speed, un-controllability ...

The vital characteristics of those *exposed* to risk situations, humans, are knowledge, experience, robustness, frailty, preparedness, endurance, determination to survive, decision behavior - before/during/after a threatening/deadly event, and these are essentially *socio-psychological facets*.

For almost all hazards and emergencies and disasters, *both* facets need to be considered in a 'linked' perspective, and even more, cooperation and interaction of all involved professions is a 'must'.

Many hazards can be eliminated or avoided, at least principally

e.g., house fires, radiation leaks at power plants, mass car accidents, others can not

e.g., earthquakes, volcano eruptions, forest fires,

and that means for this type of hazards: consequences rather than causes are to be dealt with.

Moreover, the preconditions of risk events & impacts require meticulous attention. Consequently, risk management entails very different tasks, dependent on the nature of the hazard.

Let me outline what I mean with tasks:

There are principally four groups of people involved:

- o exposed residents - *either living in risk area, or being there, like commuters*
- o emergency services - *often diff. ones for various kinds of emergencies*
- o government & councils - *responsible for legislation and administration.*
- o and the media - *newspapers, radio, television, plus websites*

and these deal with four types of issues:

technical and/or medical and/or administrative and/or socio-psychological topics.

Each group delivers or receives at least two or three types of issues, for example, an emergency service may provide

- o *technical* features of a risk situation like a threatening forestfire,
- o outline *medical* dangers, e.g., to burn or to suffocate,
- o and should add *psychological* advice about how to cope with a catastrophe.

Furthermore, the exposed population, ranging from individuals to communities at large, and their specific vulnerability need to be reflected in any mitigation effort.

Analyzing emergency management processes reveals that "linking technology and psychology" is a very significant contribution for achieving the impending aims. Any kind of risk control is more than identifying technical trouble or faults and applying technology: it is done by people who have to *communicate*, in several ways: they get instructions, they need to talk with other team members, and they have to provide crucial information to those exposed to a hazards. All this goes better if there is a good understanding of psychological features and processes which are intertwined with technical factors of either the hazard or the impacts of a disaster.

The nature, agenda and culture within The International Emergency Management Society is a prolific meadow for the symbiosis I argue for ...

I am a psychologist and sociologist, plus, a professor, almost an outsider -- and of course I am aware that social scientists are often rather a minority than a majority in the disaster context ...

Yet at TIEMS I could always get my perspectives across, and I am even talking to you here and now about it!.

May be I engage in a idealistic view? Is my rumination naive?
Do I request a philosophy and a strategy which is long done? NO!
Or something which is undoable? NO!

The symbiosis of technology and psychology is a great aim for us TIEMS people, and we shall continue this endeavour fearless and with elan !!

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